

HOUSE ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE  
Testimony on LIEEF Program – November 8, 2011  
Sharon Theroux, Co-Chair, CTKMW

Good morning. My name is Sharon Theroux presenting this testimony on behalf of the Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm. I am the co-chair of the Coalition and the Energy Program Director of MCAAA. The Coalition was created in 1987 as a voluntary association, with participation from non-profit energy assistance organizations, state regulators and departments, energy service providers and others with direct or indirect involvement in low income household energy issues. Involved members include the regulated electric and gas utilities in Michigan, Salvation Army, Michigan Community Action Agency Association and members, The Heat and Warmth Fund, United Way, Michigan Energy Options, WARM Training, True North, MPSC, DHS and more. The Coalition participates in public advocacy supporting funding of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, including recent joint efforts to maintain the maximum federal funding level for fiscal year 2012.

Since the Coalition was founded almost 25 years ago, members have met monthly to discuss how to meet the energy-assistance needs of Michigan's most vulnerable households.

Together, the Coalition members seek to improve the availability of financial and human resources to meet the energy assistance needs of Michigan's low income households. The members perform this mission through exchange of information, developing new ideas, public education and advocacy.

**Our efforts have produced:**

- Energy Assistance Directory-showing by county what assistance service agencies can provide to help low income clients.
- Website –[coalitiontokeepmichiganwarm.com](http://coalitiontokeepmichiganwarm.com); currently with over 1,000 individuals and 100 organizations joined as supporters.
- Education-to state and federal officials about the challenges many of Michigan's low-income residents face and more recently to media about the consequences of shrinking federal and state funds for energy assistance.

Meeting the needs of low-income households requires support from both federal LIHEAP and state funding resources like the Low Income Energy Efficiency Fund. Michigan's LIEEF funding is the major supplemental funding to the federal dollars. Even at current funding levels, agencies are unable to meet all of the needs for home heating assistance and energy efficiency. With adequate funding to provide proper weatherization of homes, energy education about how to consume less energy, and bill payment assistance, these challenges can be overcome.

After the court ruling that ceased the LIEEF funding, a Coalition subcommittee was formed to discuss the impact of LIEEF funding and what action might be taken. Many Coalition members were recipients of the LIEEF grants and agreed the funding resource is critical to meeting the

needs of low income customers. The subcommittee met almost weekly over a two month period and compiled a Fact Sheet that I have provided to you and will summarize (Read Some of the Bullet Points on Fact Sheet)

In closing, the Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm appreciates this opportunity to educate the Committee on the impact of LIEEF funding and the serious impact the cuts in LIEEF, as well as LIHEAP, will have on Michigan's low income households. Coalition members are willing to provide assistance in gathering additional information to the Committee, as needed. Additionally, please remember to visit us online at [coalitiontokeepmichiganwarm.com](http://coalitiontokeepmichiganwarm.com).

Thank you.